

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJ: INDIAN PRESS PLAY ATHERTON BACKGROUNDER

REF: (A) STATE 278674; (B) NEW DELHI 16975

BEGIN SUMMARY: BASED ON THE ATHERTON BACKGROUNDER, THREE LEADING INDIAN NEWSPAPERS PROMINENTLY CARRIED DESPACHES OF THEIR WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENTS WHO COMMENTED ON INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THEY PICKED UP THE APPOINTMENT OF MR. SAXBE, SANCTIONING OF 300,000 TONS OF FOODGRAINS ON CONCESSIONAL TERMS, AND THE UPCOMING JOINT COMMISSION MEETINGS AS THE SIGNIFICANT TOPICS. END SUMMARY.

1. EASWAR SAGAR, THE HINDU, DEC. 21: ENTITLED "INDO-US TIES ON 'STEADY COURSE'," SAGAR MAINTAINED THAT THE INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS ARE ON A "STEADY COURSE" AND THAT NOTHING HAS HAPPENED SINCE DR. KISSINGER'S DELHI VISIT TO RENDER THEM "FRAGILE AND THIN." HE OBSERVED THAT THE RELATIONS ARE "PROGRESSIVELY IMPROVING" AND TO "MAKE THEM

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GO BEYOND MERE GOODWILL AND RHETORIC, CONCRETE STEPS

TO CEMENT THE RELATIONSHIP HAVE TO BE TAKEN."

2. SAGAR TERMED THE SAXBE CHOICE AS "AN INDEX OF THE IMPORTANCE THE US ATTACHED TO ITS REPRESENTATION IN DELHI."

3. IN THE FIELD OF TRADE AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS, SAGAR QUOTED AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES HOPING THAT THE NEW US TRADE BILL WOULD "LEAD TO A SPURT IN INDIA'S EXPORTS TO THE US."

4. T.V. PARASURAM, THE INDIAN EXPRESS, DEC. WPC HEADLINED "IMPROVEMENT OF TIES WITH US 'GOING APACE'," PARASURAM LEADS BY STRESSING "THE MOMENTUM OF PLACING INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS ON A MORE MATURE, HEALTHY AND ENDURING BASIS WAS BEING MAINTAINED." HE ADDED: "THE KISSINGER VISIT TO INDIA TURNED A NEW PAGE IN INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS AND NOTHING HAD HAPPENED SINCE THEN TO CHANGE THAT." HE CITED AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES SAYING THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS WERE "NOW LOOKING TO THE FUTURE MORE THAN TO THE PAST."

5. HE HELD THAT "THE APPOINTMENT OF A VERY PROMINENT PUBLIC FIGURE LIKE SAXBE....REFLECTED THE IMPORTANCE THE US ATTACHED TO THE RELATIONSHIP."

6. PARASURAM MENTIONED THAT "BILATERALLY THEY (WASHINGTON AND DELHI) SAW THE WHOLE AREA OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT AS ONE WHERE THEY COULD GET CLOSER....THEY ARE NOW SHIFTING AWAY FROM AID TO FOCUS ON TRADE AND INVESTMENT."

7. HIS REPORTAGE ON CHINA INCLUDED THESE COMMENT: "THE VIEW THAT THE US PAID MORE ATTENTION TO CHINA THAN TO INDIA WAS NO LONGER CORRECT. IT WAS TRUE THAT IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE NIXON ADMINISTRATION THE EMPHASIS WAS ON CHINA BUT THAT WAS BECAUSE THE ADMINISTRATION WAS TRYING TO CHANGE A POLICY....THE VIEW THAT GREATER ATTENTION WAS PAID TO CHINA MIGHT BE VALID OVER A PARTICULAR PERIOD BUT NOT OVER A PERIOD OF TIME."

8. M.V. KAMATH, THE TIMES OF INDIA, DEC. 20: STORY CONTENT WAS REFLECTED IN THE HEADLINE, "US NOT TO FEED ARMS RACE IN SOUTH ASIA." HE INTERPRETED THE STATEMENT THAT US WAS KEEPING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE QUESTION OF SUPPLYING ARMS TO PAKISTAN "UNDER REVIEW" AS "MORE AN ASSERTION OF SOVEREIGN RIGHTS THAN EXPRESSION OF AN INTENT TO SUPPLY PAKISTAN ON THE SLY."

9. ON INDO-AMERICAN RELATIONS, KAMATH REMARKED THAT THE CURRENT RELATIONS ARE "NO LONGER MARKED WITH PETULANCE" AND THAT THERE IS "A GENUINE DESIRE" IN WASHINGTON TO SET THE RELATIONS ON "EVEN KEEL." ACCORDING TO HIM, WASHINGTON ALSO

FEELS THAT "INDIA TOO IS EQUALLY ANXIOUS TO RECIPROCATATE THESE SENTIMENTS."

10. HE NOTED THE SAXBE APPOINTMENT INDICATES THE "HIGH PRESTIGE" IN WHICH THE US ADMINISTRATION HOLDS THE POST.

11. ALL THREE USE FREQUENT ATTRIBUTION TO "AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES."
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